

I Can Say

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I Can Say

by [Random_Hufflepuff](#)

Summary

Peter Parker thought his life sucked when his parents died, and that was before he was bitten by a radioactive spider.

And then May was dead, and Ben blamed Peter.

But he was okay with that, because he blamed himself, too.

Or~

After a particularly bad beating from Ben, Peter texts Ned for help. Or at least he thinks he does.

He realizes too late that he accidentally contacted Tony.

Notes

TW for this story for physical and mental child abuse!

Please take care of yourselves! If your mental state will be in any way negatively affected by this then I beg you to skip it!

Also, this story is inspired by the song I Can Say by Olivia Millersch. 10/10 recommend listening to it if you have the time.

Anyway, enjoy! :)

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

“I was once a star, shining bright

You pulled me out of the sky

Stole all my light, why?

Why?”

Uncle Ben has piercing blue eyes that used to make Peter feel safe and loved. They sparkled with life, with wisdom, complementing the goofy smile that always rested upon his face. But now they were dull, empty. The brightness died the day May did. And now Peter doesn't find comfort in them, he finds hate.

But it's not like he should find comfort in them anyway. That would be selfish, right? It is his fault that May was dead, and now Ben was forced to care for him alone. He never wanted kids.

And if he wants to grieve by getting drunk and beating his wife's killer black and blue, who was Peter to stop him?

Because that would be selfish.

But he always had Ned to find comfort in, and that was enough for him. That's all he needs.

And it seemed that he might be needing him again right now because Ben was *mad*.

But that was Peter's fault—everything was Peter's fault.

Ben noticed that Peter left. He leaves every night for patrol, coming back at around midnight on school nights and three in the morning on weekends. But Ben had never noticed because he was too busy drinking or playing poker—not to mention the fact that he didn't care enough about Peter to check on him. But he noticed tonight.

Peter could practically see steam leaking from his ears as he climbed into his bedroom from his window. Ben was sitting in the chair at his desk, seeming to have been waiting for him.

It's a good thing he'd changed from his suit in an alley already, that would have caused a whole other set of problems.

“Where have you been?” Ben asked.

“I—I was...” He didn't really know what to say. He was out as Spider-Man, but it's not like he could say that. “I was at... Ned's house.”

“Why?”

“We have... a partner project. For Chemistry. I didn't think you would let me go and... and we had to finish it.”

“So you snuck out.”

“I—yes.”

“What was that?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you understand that sneaking out is against the rules, correct?”

“Yes, sir.”

Ben nodded, rubbing a finger over his chin.

“You know what happens when you break the rules, yes?”

“Yes, sir.”

Ben nodded again before standing with a sigh and unbuckling his belt.

“My brother? My sister-in-law? My wife? And now I’m stuck with you and you can’t even listen to the basic rules. It’s like a curse. Used to think it was Parker Luck, but it seems to just be Peter Luck. God, you’re so selfish. You’ve ruined my life. Do you get that?”

“Yes, sir. Sorry, sir.”

“Sorry ain’t gonna cut it.”

He motioned for Peter to turn around and get into position. He swallowed and bit his lip before turning, tugging off his shirt as he did so, and placed his hands above his head onto the wall.

His now exposed back was littered with scars, but that didn’t deter his quietly furious uncle.

He was always the worst when he was quiet. He wished Ben would yell, or throw something.

He hissed and clenched his eyes as the first strike landed on his bare skin.

Ben brought the belt down again. And again. And again.

His back was red and inflamed but he continued, bringing it back onto the places already injured.

Eventually, Peter could feel his skin start to break, beads of blood beginning to escape and then cling to the belt as it landed on top of them.

Ben unfolded the belt, now holding it in the middle, deciding to hit Peter with the buckle.

And Peter couldn’t help it, he cried. Tears streamed down his cheeks and sobs wracked his body, which seemed to only make Ben angrier.

The man grunted. “Turn around.”

Peter whimpered as he straightened his body out. Moving shouldn’t hurt this much. His turn was slow, and Ben was becoming impatient.

He whipped the belt again, and it made contact with his half-turned face. The buckle hit his upper cheek.

He gasped, moving his hand to the wound.

Ben usually never went for the face, for obvious reasons.

And damn, *it hurt*.

He turned as fast as he could, facing his uncle. They locked eyes for a few seconds, and that was when Peter realized that he caught no scent of alcohol at all.

He had super senses. He could hear his uncle's heartbeat, hell, he could hear the heartbeats of every person in the entire apartment complex if he focused enough. He could smell the dish soap a stranger used across the street if he wanted to. But no alcohol.

Ben was sober.

Peter closed his eyes again, tears falling from them as he did so.

Ben kicked him, and he fell back into the wall on his damaged back. He then proceeded to punch him in the chest and stomach, and Peter could feel his ribs cracking and breaking.

And then Ben punched him in the side of the head and Peter fell to the floor.

"What are you?"

"Self'sh," he coughed out in response.

"And?"

"Waste 'f space."

"And?"

"Mur'r'r"

"I don't enjoy doing this, Peter. You do this to yourself. Stop breaking my rules."

"Yes, sir."

Ben dropped the belt on the floor. "And wipe the blood off of that. Get it back to me by tomorrow."

"Yes, sir."

Ben stood there for a moment and then left the room, closing the door behind him.

Peter choked on a sob and then opened his eyes. His vision was blurry with tears and dots danced in his sight.

Was his room moving?

He crawled toward his bed, his movements stiff and painful. Blood was still flowing slowly from his back, staining his pants.

He did ultimately make it to his bed, and he grabbed his backpack from atop it. He opened it and fumbled for his phone.

He closed his eyes again for a moment.

God, he was dizzy. And those black dots weren't going away.

He opened his eyes again and clicked on his messages, tapping quickly at Ned's contact (named

Chair Guy affectionately).

ned i know youre prob busy or smth and this is stupid but i kinda maybe need some help

He noticed that his hand was shaking as he pressed send.

i think i might pass out if i stand

also i might need stitches im not sure

also i really cant breathe my ribs are fucked

its not healing but thats not very surprising

he was really mad

anyway i totally get it if youre too busy i can fix it on my own

sorry this isnt your problem

say hi to your mom for me and thank her for the sandwich

see you at school on monday

Peter closed his eyes again and let his phone slip from his hand and onto the floor.

Why'd he have to bring Ned into this? Again?

Ben was right. He was selfish.

Chapter 2

“I was once a boat, sailing off to sea

You dragged me back to the shore

Changing my course in life

Why me? Why you got to pick on me?”

After the whole Accords situation, the Avengers realized just how fragile their makeshift family was. Once they ultimately compromised with that mess, Steve decided that the team needed more bonding time.

Hence, why Tony was currently on the common floor, sitting at the dinner table surrounded by others.

Team dinners were a thing now, and he would die before he admits that he rather enjoys them.

It gets him out of the lab for one thing, and rather than a bag of chips to replace the dinner he always forgot to eat, he gets an actual meal.

And yeah, he still makes a show of complaining when he gets pulled from his projects, but come one he has a reputation to keep.

He also refuses to admit that he did learn a lot more about his teammates. Or they used to be teammates, they were truly like a family now.

He shoved a forkful of lasagna in his mouth, watching affectionately as Sam and Bucky played footsies under the table, Steve, Bruce, and Nat debated about whether crunchy or creamy peanut butter was superior, and as Clint, sitting with his chair tilted as always, balanced his water bottle on his head.

The only thing he could think of that could make this any better was if Peter was here.

Obviously if Pepper, Happy, or Rhodey were here it would be better as well, but he saw them all the time. He lives on the same floor as Pepper, they go to sleep together every night and eat lunch together every afternoon. Happy is just always around—especially if he’s in public. And Rhodey seems to always be by his side whenever he’s in the tower.

But he only gets to see Peter on Saturdays, internship days.

He refuses to admit that the hyper teenager had an effect on him, but anyone with eyes and at least two brain cells could see that the man has been changed for the better. All because of one boy with Bambi eyes.

He heard his phone buzz and he glanced at it as he took a sip of water.

It buzzed again. He sighed and set down his glass.

It buzzed a third time.

By the fourth time, he could see the others around the table looking at him.

By the seventh, Clint piped up. “Didn’t know you were so popular.”

“Ha ha ha,” Tony replied mockingly.

It went off three more times after that.

“Are you going to get that?” Steve asked. “Sounds pretty important.”

“Probably Pepper. I’m trying to think if I missed any meetings.”

“Ten times in a row, she must be mad,” Natasha said with a smirk. She raised her eyebrow at him. “I’ll read them if you won’t.”

“Wow, when did you all become so nosy?” He picked up his phone and began scrolling through his notifications.

“Not Pepper,” he said with a warm smile. “It’s Peter.”

ned i know youre prob busy or smth and this is stupid but i kinda maybe need some help

So Peter didn’t mean to text him. The kid probably needed help in English class.

i think i might pass out if i stand

His smile dropped.

also i might need stitches im not sure

also i really cant breathe my ribs are fucked

Must have been a pretty rough Spider-Man day. He should probably go get him and drag his stubborn ass to Medbay.

its not healing but thats not very surprising

That’s... concerning. Peter’s healing factor is better than Steve Rogers’, why wouldn’t it be working? Why is that not a surprise to Peter?

he was really mad

Tony felt his eyebrows stitch together. He could tell his face was etched with concern, and he could see through his peripheral vision that it was starting to make the rest of the team a little anxious.

anyway i totally get it if youre too busy i can fix it on my own

sorry this isnt your problem

say hi to your mom for me and thank her for the sandwich

see you at school on monday

This kid was going to put him in an early grave.

Hey kid, wrong number. Mind telling me what happened?

“Hey Friday, get in contact with Karen will you?” he said as he waited for a response.

“Is something wrong with Peter?” Clint asked. Tony opened his mouth to respond but Friday interrupted him.

“Karen tells me that Peter is not currently in his suit. Would you still like me to reach her?”

Not in the suit? But if these weren't Spider-Man related injuries then... what were they?

he was really mad

Did he get into a fight?

No, Peter wasn't the fighting type. And he could definitely hold his own.

“Boss?”

“Yeah, get her.”

“Tony, what's going on?” Steve asked. Tony shook his head.

“I'm not sure. But whatever it is, it's not good.”

“Hello, Mr. Stark,” Karen's cheerful voice said through the ceiling speakers.

“Hey, was Peter injured on his last patrol?”

“No, sir.” Tony sucked in a breath.

“Where is he now?”

“My current location is his bedroom, so he was here at least thirty-five minutes ago when he brought me here. Since he is not currently in the suit I can not confirm whether or not he is still here.”

“Track his phone for me, will you?”

“Of course, sir.” There were a few tense moments of silence. Every Avenger at the table waited with bated breath for whatever Karen had to say next.

“His phone is in his bedroom.”

Tony's face scrunched in confusion. Peter couldn't have left his house, been beaten up, and walked all the way home injured in such a short time frame. Especially since the boy himself admitted to not being able to stand.

And if he was home the whole time...

He could practically hear the click in his brain as the only possible conclusion pushed its way into his mind.

“Shit,” he whispered. “Shit!”

“What? What is shit?” Sam asked quickly.

He looked around the room, and he could tell by their hardened expressions that Clint, Bruce, and Natasha had come to the same conclusion.

“Karen has Peter told you anything about what happens at home?” Tony asked urgently as he stood from his chair and called for his suit.

The room was quiet again, as if the AI was hesitating.

“Peter has asked that our conversations remain confidential.”

“Override. Code 60089314.”

Karen hesitated again.

“Peter has admitted to being subjected to violence at the hands of his uncle, who is an alcoholic.”

“Son of a bitch.” He tapped furiously at his watch, wishing the suit would come faster.

Of all the people in the world.

All the people and of course it was the kind-hearted, bubbly nerd that looked out for the little guy.

Not Peter.

This shouldn’t have happened. He should have noticed.

God, not Peter.

Chapter 3

I was once a tree, raising from the ground

Winter, spring, summer or fall, I still grew tall

Till you cut me down

Are you really happy now?

Peter felt his phone buzz, and he opened his eyes expecting to see a text from Ned. He was wrong.

Hey kid, wrong number. Mind telling me what happened?

Shit.

He snatched his phone and, sure enough, his frantic string of texts had been sent to Tony, not to Ned.

Shit. *Shit.*

This was bad. He wasn't sure this could be worse.

He threw his phone to the ground again.

Maybe he could find a way to convince the man that he was alright. If he could get to the bathroom and clean himself up and maybe send a picture of him smiling with his thumb up. He could totally do that. A convincing picture, maybe along with a text reading *sorry mr. stark!!! that was supposed to go to ned! its part of this really lame game we play im totally fine see?*

Peter nodded. That would have to do. He let out a long breath and began to stand.

His back screamed at him to stop, and his chest didn't enjoy the movement either. He was so, so dizzy. The spots got larger.

And then his knees buckled and he lost consciousness before his head hit the carpet.

~

The familiar sound of repulsors woke him up. He supposed he should be worried about the implications of that, but considering the fact that his entire body felt that it was on fire, he really couldn't get himself to care.

He closed his eyes as he listened to the front door cave in. Ben made a startled yelp and the Iron Man suit appeared, the big metal boots thudding with every step.

It began to register to Peter just how tired he was.

"Where is he!?" he heard Tony yell. Ben must have pointed because he didn't say a word, but

Tony made his way to Peter's room just the same.

His door opened with a loud squeak. Peter opened his eyes again just in time to see Tony step out of the suit. The man rushed toward him, dropping to his knees once he was close.

"God, kid," he said.

"D'n't cry M's'er S'ark," Peter said quietly. He gave his mentor a small smile. "See. 'm fine."

"I'm going to get you out of here, alright?"

"Kay." Peter blinked slowly. "'m tired."

"Stay awake, Pete."

"Kay. 'll try."

Peter gave in to another frighteningly slow blink. And then another. And then another, but his eyes didn't open after that one.

~

Peter woke to find that he was no longer in his bedroom. He looked around at the plain white walls and row of plain white beds. The smell of disinfectant lingered in the air. He must be in a hospital.

But that wasn't good, was it? One blood sample and his identity would be revealed.

He had to get out of here.

He shifted, going to pull the IV from his vein when the door opened and Bruce Banner himself walked into the room.

"Oh, you're awake."

Peter let out a breath, instantly relaxed, and let his head go back into the pillow. Of course he wasn't at a hospital, he was at Medbay in Avengers Tower.

"I thought you weren't that kind of doctor," Peter said with a light smile. Bruce chuckled.

"Guilty. But I do know the basics, like how to read your vitals and make sure you're not dead. Tony wanted me to check on you."

"Mr. Stark? Is he here?"

"Yeah, yeah. He was in here with you all night and all morning but Rhodey just dragged him out for some fresh air. I can go get him."

Hope bloomed in Peter's chest but he quickly dulled it away. Mr. Stark had been here all night and all morning for him, and now he wanted to take up more of his time?

Selfish.

"No, no it's fine Dr. Banner." He could tell that Bruce didn't quite believe him.

“Really, it wouldn’t be any trouble. Tony would probably be mad if I *don’t* tell him you’re awake.”

“Oh.” Peter swallowed. “Okay, well if you want. I don’t want to get you in trouble.” Bruce nodded slowly, concern dancing in his features.

“Yeah, I’ll go get him. I’ll see you later with the rest of the team, Pete. Get well soon.” And with that, he left.

Peter let out a long sigh. What was going to happen now? He knew that Tony wouldn’t let him go back with Ben no matter how hard Peter would try to convince him that he deserved it. But other than Ben he had no family to go to.

He didn’t want to be stuck in foster care. He was fifteen, no one wanted to adopt a fifteen-year-old. He would age out and then what?

He didn’t think his life could get any worse. How was it that the world continued to prove him wrong?

The doors opened again and Tony rushed in. An easy smile plastered itself onto his face once he saw Peter.

“Welcome back to the world of the living, Mr. Parker,” he said as he sat down in the armchair next to his bed. “I leave for ten minutes. I’ll never let Rhodey live this down.”

“It’s alright Mr. Stark, I’m completely fine. I should probably go home now actually, I’m not supposed to be here until—oh it is Saturday now, isn’t it?”

Tony gave him a sad look. “You know I’m not letting you go back there, right?”

“Well, yeah. But I have to. You can’t stop me.”

“I can and I will.” Peter clenched his jaw. He made his way to respond but a yawn came out instead.

“Get some sleep, bud. We’ll talk about it later,” Tony said. Peter nodded, looking solemnly at his hero.

And the last thing he saw before drifting to sleep was Tony’s warm brown eyes.

Chapter 4

I don't know where I'm going

But when I get there, I can say

That I have been the kindest me, that I can be

Can you say the same?

“Two broken ribs, five cracked ribs. His back was practically skinned. Bruises everywhere, including one on his upper cheek. Concussion. Dehydration. Severe malnourishment, which I’m assuming is what slowed his healing factor.”

“Shit.”

“I’m a doctor, Mr. Stark. I am obligated, both morally and by law, to report this.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Tony nodded to himself for a while, his eyes staring studiously at the tile floor. “Uh, what will happen to him?”

“Probably foster care.”

The room was silent for a moment.

“No that won’t do. Any other options?”

“Not really... Unless...”

“I’m a billionaire, Ms. Cho. If there’s another option I can handle it, no matter how expensive.”

“It’s not just money, Mr. Stark.”

“Lay it on me.”

“You could take him in.”

“Huh.”

Tony rubbed a hand over his chin. Having the kid around all the time was... oddly domestic. But he was surprised to find that he didn’t mind the idea. Ever since Peter came around, Saturdays have become his most anticipated day of the week, and now every day could be a Saturday.

God, what was he thinking? He couldn’t take care of a kid. A super-powered, vigilante, certified genius, traumatized kid.

“That sounds like a lot of paperwork,” he joked. Helen didn’t laugh.

“Whatever you do you should decide before CPS comes to take him.” Tony nodded.

He needed to talk to Pepper.

~

Peter woke up the next morning in that same plain white hospital room with the same too-bright lights. Tony was in the chair next to him and the boy gave him a small, tight-lipped smile.

“Hey, kiddo,” Tony said cheerfully. “How ya doin’?” he asked with a jerky head-tilt.

“Fine. I heal fast,” Peter responded honestly. His chest ached, those ribs would take a little longer to heal, and his back still stung some, but it was a vast difference from how he felt back at the apartment.

“You’d he’ll faster if you ate more. That’s why we have you on an IV, get some nutrients in you.” The man paused for a moment, his lips pursing slightly. “But you already knew that, didn’t you?”

Peter looked down at his hands. “I’m sorry, sir.”

“No need to apologize, Pete, you did nothing wrong. I just wish you’d told someone.”

“I told Ned,” he whispered.

“Ned can’t get you out of that situation on his own. He’s a minor.”

Peter sighed. “I know. But I couldn’t tell anyone else.”

“Why not?”

“Who would I have told?”

“Me?” The two locked eyes and the room was plunged into abrupt silence.

“No I couldn’t have, Mr. Stark.” Peter looked away, suddenly more interested in a hangnail.

“Why not?”

“Well because... Because I’m Spider-Man and I shouldn’t be so weak. Maybe if you saw how weak I was you’d take the suit away or something. And anyway, it’s not like I have anywhere to go. Ben is the last family I have left... I don’t want to go to foster care... not again. Besides, it’s not like I didn’t deserve it, I—”

“Alright, I’m going to stop you right there. You’re not weak. I can confidently tell you that half of the Avengers have been abused. That’s just the ones I know about. A lot of us are messed up, kid. Even me, you should’ve seen. Booze and parties as a coping mechanism, panic attacks after the Battle of New York for years.

“You need people on your side to help you get through that, even the strongest people can’t do it by themselves. I had Pepper and Rhodey and Happy. And you have Ned, but you also have us, you have me.

“And... it’s not like you didn’t deserve it? Underoos, do you really believe that? No one deserves that, okay? No one. Especially not you. We’re going to have to work on your self-worth once this starts settling down.

“And I would never let you go to foster care. I’m rich, I can do whatever I want. And if that means keeping you out of that shit then so be it. Besides—wait, again? You’ve been in foster care?”

“Yeah, I was placed with this guy... Skip... while my aunt and uncle were getting the paperwork to take me in after my parents died. He... wasn't very nice.”

“We're definitely getting you a therapist,” Tony said with a soft chuckle. He closed his eyes for a second. “Where was I in that wonderful speech I was giving? Ah, yes, place to stay. You have one.”

“I—no I don't I just said that.”

“Ah ah ah, that's where you're wrong. I must've forgotten to mention... I want to adopt you.”

Peter blanched, his mouth parting slightly in surprise. “M-Mr. Stark you don't have to do that.”

“You're right. I don't. But I want to, and I do what I want... So long as you say yes of course.” Tony looked at Peter's face, suddenly nervous. His heart rate quickened when he noticed tears starting to well in the boy's eyes.

“I hope those are tears of joy,” he joked. Peter nodded.

“Yes, yes. Oh my god. I don't even know what to say.” Adoption. Tony Stark wanted to adopt him. Peter Parker, scrawny nerd, a teenager, a Lego-loving, Star Wars obsessed, enhanced *burden*. But Tony Stark wanted him.

God, he might just pass out.

“Good,” Tony said, a smile flashing across his face. “Glad.”

And what started out as a terrible situation became the best day of both of their lives.

Chapter 5

Now I'm a shooting star, can't catch me

Tried to pull me out of the sky, steal all my light

But look, it's not dimming

One month later

The adoption was finalized a few days prior. Peter still couldn't believe his luck. Neither could Ned, who, when Peter told him the news, squealed so high pitched it felt as if dogs should be the only ones able to hear it.

A lot of things have changed since he moved in with Tony all those weeks ago. For one, he finally stopped referring to everyone formally. Mr. Stark was now Tony, Mr. Wilson was just Sam, Mr. Rogers was just Steve, and so on. He also called Clint Uncle Clint now (hey, the archer asked *really* nicely. Plus it annoys Tony).

He hung out with the Avengers way more often than before. They even started building their own rituals together.

Peter and Bruce would obviously do science together. When the man found out that Peter could keep up with him in chemistry, he was pleasantly surprised, and chemistry projects together became a frequent activity between the two of them.

Peter and Natasha danced together. He found her doing ballet one day and asked if she could teach her, to which he excitedly replied yes. He is naturally flexible and graceful because of the spider bite, so he picked up on her lessons quite easily. He loved it—especially turning, even if it did make him dizzy sometimes.

Peter and Bucky baked together. He was considerably surprised when he found out about the Winter Soldier's hobby, but he like watching him mix the ingredients together and decorate. One day Bucky asked him if he wanted to help make cookies and Peter gave him an enthusiastic nod. Ever since then if you found Bucky in the kitchen baking, it was more often than not you'd find Peter right alongside him.

Peter, Clint, and Sam messed around together. They pulled practical jokes on the other Avengers as well as some lucky interns throughout the building. And on top of that, Sam was basically Peter's unofficial therapist, and Clint and he had a hideout in a particularly large vent that they stashed Pop-Tarts and played Mario cart in.

Peter and Steve trained together. Peter will be the first to admit that he's not the best fighter, technically speaking. He relies too much on his powers, and Steve decided that if he was going to be a superhero he was going to learn how to defend himself properly. In just the short amount of time that they've done this, Peter could already tell he was getting better during patrols.

He was also Steve's go-to pop-culture guy, helping him get adjusted to the 21st century. He recommended movies, TV shows, and books, as well as teaching him about things like Vines, memes, and trends.

But his favorite would always be Tony.

It's always been Tony.

Even before he was a kid and he raised that plastic gauntlet at the droid (though he doubts the man remembers that).

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that he was basically Peter's dad now... not that he'd ever tell him that... at least not yet.

They did everything together. Mostly building stuff in the lab, but they also did more domestic stuff like falling asleep on the couch while watching movies together, tossing goldfish in each other's mouths, eating ice cream even though they were both lactose-intolerant.

And yeah, he still had his moments. He had nightmares about May's death, but was now mostly convinced that it wasn't his fault. He was finally starting to accept that he wasn't a burden or a waste of space, but the word 'selfish' was still drilled deep into him. He was working on it, though.

For the first time since May died almost two years ago, he was truly happy. Not just happy sometimes, in some situations with certain people. Happy was his default now.

He'd forgotten how that felt.

And Tony and the rest of the Avengers reminded him.

End Notes

Kinda off-topic but I make Marvel edits on TikTok @p3t3r...park3r if anyone is interested... :)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!